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Pawns and Cophetua



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS—

- POEMS. 1908-1914
SWORDS AND PLOUGHSHARES. 1915
OLTON POOLS. 1916
TIDES. 1917
LOYALTIES. 1919
SEEDS OF TIME. 1921
PRELUDES. 1922
FROM AN UNKNOWN ISLE. 1924

PLAYS—

- REBELLION. 1914
ABRAHAM LINCOLN. 1918
MARY STUART. 1921
OLIVER CROMWELL. 1921
ROBERT E. LEE. 1923
ROBERT BURNS. 1925

PROSE STUDIES—

- WILLIAM MORRIS. 1912
SWINBURNE. 1913
THE LYRIC. 1915
PROSE PAPERS. 1917.
THE MUSE IN COUNCIL. 1925

Pawns and Cophetua
Four Poetic Plays
by John Drinkwater

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PAWNS

THE STORM	First published	1915
THE GOD OF QUIET . .	„ „	1916
X=O	„ „	1917

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COPHETUA

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Reset and included in "Pawns" . . .	1922

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<i>Third „</i>	<i>Jan., 1919</i>
<i>Fourth „</i>	<i>Jan., 1920</i>
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rights application should be made to
the Author.*

NOTE TO "PAWNS"

THESE plays were not only intended for the stage, they were written under the actual discipline of stage production, and their craftsmanship was learnt in a theatre. That poetic drama has fallen into neglect in a country which, having produced several of the world's greatest dramatic poets, never plays any but the first of them in its theatres, and hardly ever plays him without the most shameless and foolish distortion of his work, is the fault not of poetry but of the theatre. For nearly two hundred years in England the poets very rightly have refused to work for a theatre that has sacrificed the drama to the actor, instead of so training its actors that they could honourably give the poet the supreme joy of seeing his work nobly and tenderly interpreted. The poets, in their chosen exile, have suffered; for dramatic imagination, deprived of its gathering to the theatre, cannot, even with a *Cenci* or an *Atalanta* for harvest, be wholly prosperous. But the loss to the theatre has been immeasurably greater; since the breach, English poetry has lost no splendour, but, with the exception of half a dozen plays at most, the drama of the theatre, until the last few years, has kept none. A theatre audience can be the most exhilarating crowd-intelligence in the world, once it has been given the chance of caring for good drama on the stage, but the appetite of a theatre audience will inevitably grow to what it is given. And only in a theatre where the audience has been nourished upon fine fare can poetry live, or the poet decently exercise his dramatic instinct. The rarity of such theatres is the measure of the rarity of poetic drama.

These plays had the great good fortune of being shaped in a theatre in which, of a hundred plays produced in four years, not five would fail to satisfy a jury composed, let us say, of Shakespeare and Congreve and Synge, not, of course, as to their greatness, but at least as to their artistic integrity. Barry Jackson's Repertory Theatre has created an audience in Birmingham which in the decision as to the worth of a play has not, I believe, its peer in England. To be associated with such a theatre is in itself a delight; to have helped to bring poetry to its stage is a privilege which I cannot measure.

I should like to say a word of the performances. The part of Alice in *The Storm* makes heavy demands upon the staying power of the actress. While Mona Limerick's great emotional grip, perhaps, most finely caught my imaginative intention, Cecily Byrne has always seemed to me to find a rare spring of nervous energy in playing the part. Mary Merrall I saw in rehearsal but not afterwards. Her technical clarity must have had its decided value. The play has always been lucky in performance, and I have not known it to fail in its impression, even before strange audiences. *The God of Quiet*, with its rather experimental idiom of construction, gave, apparently, both pleasure and puzzlement. It was beautifully and most devotedly acted, and Arthur Gaskin's exquisitely personal design for the stage was worthy of a theatre where Barry Jackson, in quality and measure of actual work achieved, has quietly proved himself the first stage designer in England to-day.* That

* This is to speak with nothing but grateful admiration for such genius in stage design as that, say, of Mr. Charles Ricketts. But Mr. Jackson can point to perhaps thirty productions, his designs for which, carried out in the ordinary routine of repertory work and quick from his daily contact with his materials, combine a fine gift with unique opportunity, and make a body of achievement that is by itself in the English theatre to-day.

the play held an audience there was never any doubt, nor, I am glad to think, that its lyric plan gave many people deep pleasure. But the ending seemed to some quite friendly critics to be elusive in its significance. This, I think, was because irony is the most difficult of all things on the stage. *X=O* has, I hope, profited in directness by experience learnt from the earlier plays. It had very impressive settings devised by Frank Clewlow, which enabled the play to move with intervals of but half a minute each, and of the players I cannot speak with enough gratitude. I could have asked for no finer performance.

It is but as a simple earnest of my feeling that I record in an appendix the names of the actors with whose help these plays first found their truest life.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

BIRMINGHAM,

May, 1917.

P.S.—*November, 1921.*—To these plays I am now adding *Cophetua*, written in 1911, and then first produced by The Pilgrim Players, the company from which the Birmingham Repertory Theatre came into being. A note of the play's subsequent performance at that theatre will be found in the Appendix.

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THE STORM

To
BARRY V. JACKSON

The characters are—

ALICE

JOAN, her young Sister

SARAH

AN OLD MAN

A YOUNG STRANGER

THE STORM

A mountain cottage. It is a midwinter night. Outside a snowstorm rages.

ALICE is looking out through the window. JOAN, her young sister, and SARAH, an old neighbour woman, are sitting over the fire.

Alice : It isn't fair of God. Eyes are no good,
Nor lanterns, in a blackness like to that.
How can they find him out ? It isn't fair.

Sarah : God is for prayers. You'll anger Him speaking
so.

Alice : I have prayed these hours, and now I'm tired
of it.

He is caught in some grip of the rocks, and crying out,
And crying and crying, and none can hear him cry,
Because of this great beastliness of noise.

Sarah : Past crying now, I think.

Joan : There, take no heed
Of what she says—it's a rusty mind she has,
Being old, and wizened with bad luck on the hills.

Sarah : Rusty or no, I've a thought the man is dead.
No news has been growing apace from nightfall on
Into bad news, and now it's as though one stood
At the door and said—we found him lying cold.

Alice : Whist ! you old bitter woman. Will it never
stay
In its wicked fury ? . . . and the snow's like a
black rain

Whipping the crying wind. If it would rest awhile
I could think and mind me what were best to do
To help my man. But a savagery like this
Beats at the wits till they have no tidiness.

Sarah : We'll sit and wait till they come.

Alice : And I a woman
Would never let him ask for anything,
Because of the daily thought I took for him,—
And against this spite now I've no strength at all.

Sarah : For all you would bake his bread to a proper
turn
And remember always the day for his clean shift,
There was many a scolding word for him to bear.

Joan : Hush—

Alice : Let her talk. What does she know at all,—
Thinking crossed words between a man and a woman
Have anything to do with the heart ? We have,
My man and I, more than a fretful mood
Can thief or touch. My man—I must go myself.

Joan : There is nothing you could do.

Sarah : 'Tis men
Should carry the dead man in.

Alice : My man
Is alive, I say—surely my man's not dead—
Surely, I say—old woman, your croaking talk
Teases my brain like the pestilence out there
Till I doubt the thing I know. There's not a crag
Or cleft in the hills but is natural to him

As the stairs beyond the door there—surely, surely—
Yet nothing is sure.

Sarah : Death has a way with him,
A confident way.

Alice : You know that he's not dead—
I know that too—if only that dark rage
Howling out there would leave tormenting me,
And let me reason it out in peace a little,
I could be quite, quite sure that he's not dead.

Sarah : Age is a quiet place where you can watch
The world bent with its pain and still be patient,
And warm your hands by the fire because you know
That the newest sorrow and the oldest sorrow are one.
They will bring and put him down upon the floor :
Be ready for that, girl. There are times when hope is
cruel

As a fancy-man that goes without good-bye.

Alice : I have a brain that is known in three shire-towns
For a level bargain. It is strange that I should be
Listening now to a cracked old woman's clatter
When my own thoughts for him should be so clear
That I shouldn't heed the words of another body.
I want no hope—only an easy space
To remember the skill of my man among the hills
And how he would surely match their cunning with
his,

Or else to count the hours that he's been gone
And see that his chance is whittled quite away.
To have a living thought against this fear
Is all I want—but those screaming devils there
Beat in my mind like the drums in Carnarvon streets
That they use when they want to cheat folk into thinking

Joan : That an hour would bring him back, and hungry too.

Alice : An hour would bring him back—but that is nothing.

I know it now : he went to the broken wire
And mended it—three-quarters of an hour—
And then he would think that after all the slates
Were best bespoken now—six miles to go ;
He would be about a mile when this began—
This wrath that will surely last till the Judgment Day—
And that would make two hours till he reached the quarry—

But he went on, and the neighbours up and down
Were scared and went out searching with their lanterns,

Like lighted gnats searching the mines of hell.
Isn't it queer to see them out there dancing
When all the time he has gone a twelve-mile journey—
And then this old woman came with her neighbour duty—
It's odd folk are,—

Sarah : It's a poor thing, spinning tales
When there's no faith in them.

Alice : Hush, I have it all
Quite clearly now, in spite of that monster baying,—
Two hours to the quarry, hindered by the night,
Then half an hour to bargain, then two hours
For beating back, his boots heavy with snow,
Or a little longer—five hours and more all told—
It is nine o'clock—he went five hours ago,
Or a little more, so that's just how it works—
He should be coming now along the road,
Tired—we must warm the cakes again.

Sarah : Ay, warm them,
A dead man's heavy bearing.

The clock strikes nine.

Alice : That's the time
To bring him back, and we'll call the lanterns in—
He must be near by now—

*A man is 'heard outside, kicking the
snow off his boots. ALICE opens the
door, and AN OLD MAN comes in, carry-
ing an unlit lantern.*

The Old Man : My candle is spent.

*JOAN takes the lantern and fits a
new candle while they speak.*

Alice : And you are going out again ?
They have not found him ?

The Old Man : No. It's not easy there.

Alice : Then he didn't go to the quarry after all.

Joan : Because they hav'n't found him ? That's no
sign.

They couldn't if he went.

Alice : Ah yes—how is it ?—
He went, and they've been looking on the hills—
But have not found him. Yes—he must have gone.
He should be back. You should have found him for me.

Sarah : She is strange because of the trouble in the
house.

I am old, and that is something.

Alice : It is not that—
I am caught away from myself by the screaming thing
That scourges the hills. And yet in spite of that
I had reckoned all his doings since he went

Until his time for coming—but you came—
You came instead. That is not right.

The Old Man (taking the lantern and lighting it):
We'll send

Across to the quarry now—

Alice: It is no use—

He'll not have gone.

The Old Man: The night is full of tricks,
But another hour will have ferreted all the hill.

He goes out.

Sarah: Simon who took his money down to market,
And wouldn't change for a good sound fact of cattle,
Fingered his earnings till a hole was worn
And came to the house again with an empty bag.
Leave making tales, my girl, poor tales—they bring no
profit,

Keeping the truth outside, and breaking away
To a thimbleful of ash themselves. He is dead.
Think hard on that. When the old king of the world
With the scourge and flail turns his strokes from the
wheat

On the goodman's floor and scars the goodman's back,
It is no time to wince. Your man is dead.
And a day and a day make Adam's fall a story.

Alice: Not down to the quarry—then—my little
Joan,

Do you know at all what a man becomes to a woman?
How should you though? If a man should take
A patch of the barren hill and dig with his hands
And down and down till he came to marble and gold,
And labouring then for a dozen years or twenty
Should build a place finer than Solomon's hall

Alice : There is treachery against us—my man—
my dear—

My brave love—they are trying to part us now !

But we must be too strong when . . . when he is
dead

*There is a knock at the door. She makes
a half movement towards it.*

He would not knock. See who it is.

JOAN opens the door and a YOUNG
TRAVELLER, buffeted and breathless, comes
in.

The Stranger :

By Thor !

There's beauty trampling men like crumpled leaves.

May I come in till it's gone ?

Joan :

Surely.

The Stranger :

I set

Every sinew taut against this power,
This supple torrent of might that suddenly rose
Out of the fallen dusk and sang and leapt
Like an athlete of the gods frenzied with wine.
It seemed to rear challenging against me,
As though the master from Valhalla's tables,
Grown heady in his revels, had cried out—
Behold me now crashing across the earth
To shake the colonies of antic men
Into a fear shall be a jest, my fellows !
And I measured myself against this bragging pride,
Climbing step by step through the blinding riot
Of frozen flakes swung on the cataract wind,
My veins praising the tyranny that was matched
Against this poor ambitious body of mine.

Alice : The storm is drenched with treachery and sin—

It is not good to praise it.

The Stranger : You on the hills
Grow dulled, maybe, to the royalty that finds
In your crooked world a thousand splendid hours,
And a storm to you is but a hindered task
Or a wall for mending or a gap in the flock.
But I was strange among this gaiety
Plying black looms in a black firmament,
This joy that was split out of the iron heavens
Where pity is not bidden to the hearts
Of the immaculate gods. I was a dream,
A cold monotony suddenly thrust
Into a waking world of lusty change,
A wizened death elected from the waste
To strive and mate with eager lords of tumult.
Beauty was winged about me, darkling speed
Took pressure of earth and smote against my face ;
I rode upon the front of heroic hours,
And once was on the crest of the world's tide,
Unseared as the elements.—But he mastered me,
That god striking a star for holiday,
And filled himself with great barbaric laughter
To see me slink away.

Alice : It is no god,
But a brainless anger, a gaunt and evil thing
That blame can't reach.

The Stranger : Not all have eyes to see.—
I'm harsh with my words, but I come from a harsh
quarrel
With larger thews than man's.

Alice : Stranger, I'd give
Comely words to any who knocks at the door.
You are welcome—but leave your praising of this blight.
You safely gabbing of sly and cruel furies,
Like a child laughing before a cage of tigers.
You with your fancy talk of lords and gods
And your hero-veins—young man, do you know this
night
Is eating through my bones into the marrow,
And creeping round my brain till thought is dead,
And making my heart the oldest thing of any ?
Do you see those lights ?

The Stranger : They seemed odd moving there,
In a storm like this.

Alice : A man is lost on the hills.

The Stranger : That's bad. But who ?

Alice : My man is lost on the hills.

Sarah : She has it now ; her man is dead on the hills.

The Stranger : I talked amiss, not knowing of trouble
here.

But why should he be dead ?

Alice : The woman is worn,
Her mind is worn, and she lives out of the world.
You ask at once as any wise man would.
I have told her and told and told that he's not dead,
And my young sister, too, though but a girl,
Says it, and she has a head beyond her years.
He is lost for an hour, or maybe for a night,
But never dead. That is the way you think ?
It is waiting that steals your proper sense away ;
And then, although you know, you let in fear
Blaspheming the thing you know—it is waiting to-night

Alice : It is spent at last. He will come from his shelter now.

My dear—come soon. Set the kettle again.

JOAN does so. There is another pause.

I have my thought again. It is an end.

I am broken. There is no pity anywhere.

The Stranger : The lights are coming.

Sarah : The anger never bates,

But scourges us till time betrays the limbs,

And strikes the tongue, and puts pence on the eyes,

And leaves the latch for stranger hands to lift.

The blackness beyond the window has given place to clear starlight on the hills.

A NUMBER OF MEN with lanterns pass by. There is a knock : ALICE opens the door, and THE OLD MAN stands there with his lighted lantern. She looks at him, and neither speaks. She turns away to the table.

Alice : Why have we waited . . . all this time
 . . . to know . . .

Her sorrow breaks over her.

THE GOD OF QUIET

To
MY FATHER

The characters are—

A YOUNG BEGGAR

AN OLD BEGGAR

A CITIZEN

A SOLDIER

FIRST KING

A HERALD

SECOND KING

THE GOD

THE GOD OF QUIET

A road at the summit of a hill outside a beleaguered city. It is the evening of a hot summer day.

On the far side of the road is a bank, from the top of which the city could be seen. On a great stone cube, halfway up the bank, is the life-sized figure of a god. Not unlike the Buddha in presence, it is the GOD OF QUIET.

TWO BEGGARS, a young man and an old, come in, moving towards the city. They stop.

Young Beggar : Nor coin nor crust.
Three leagues of dust
We've trodden. Blast
Them—let them fast
And try the flavour—

Old Beggar : Hold, man, hold—
'Twas like enough that our tale were told
For ever before the sun went down,
With the devils of war let loose to frown
On a poor man's cry for alms. We live,
And that is something—

Young Beggar : The lord forgive
Your weakling heart—

Old Beggar : Nay, ask him, you,
To pardon the stubborn thing you do
In cursing when—

Young Beggar : Stop your babbling tongue,
Your belly's old but mine is young—

Old Beggar : Nay, nay, my son ; not angry now—
Not angry—there. I've seen the plough
Break stouter stones—the times will mend.

Young Beggar : Old man, I spoke in haste—

Old Beggar : Come, lend
Your arm—there—so ; now, let us sit
And rest us here.

THE OLD MAN *sits down on the
bank ; THE YOUNG MAN goes to the
top and looks out. While he speaks
THE OLD MAN watches the god.*

Young Beggar ; The slings have hit
That city hard. Well, let them fight
And finish. Broken walls are gates
Not warded well, and men in flight
Pay toll to beggars.

Old Beggar : God creates
Good holy times of peace for us—

Young Beggar ; Peace—holy times—old chatter-pie—

Old Beggar : Rich seasons after ruinous—

Young Beggar : Dream-daft old man, put fancies by.
Wits, wits, old man, are what we need.
There's a city learning its last of good
And the time is come to drink and feed,
And there's pence for wits—

Old Beggar : One day I stood
At dusk in the golden harvest lands,
And watched the sickles rise and fall,
And the following women with patient hands
Gleaning all, gleaning all.

And the pigeons slept in the pines, and the sound
Of leaves and waters grew strange and clear,
And trouble had died, and I had found
Peace, O Lord, as here.

*He has risen, bows to the god, and
sits below the figure, untroubled.*

Young Beggar : It is dying, dying, that city.

He turns to the other.

How

Can a man keep sharp in the mind, and spring
On chance when it comes, with a patchy cow
For mate, a soft and humble thing?
Nimble fingers, a hand to strike,
Then—money, money blast you, speak,
You, mild as a bee old butcher shriek
Has pegged on a thorn what do you seek
In the eyes of a copper image, made
By some juggling fellow with fancy brains?

He stares at the god.

All right, old image, I'm not afraid
I'm not for your flock the belly's pains
Are masters may not be served by sleep
Old drowsy god I must fight, and plan,
And lie, and be cunning, and peer, and creep—
For starving's a dirty death for a man.

Old Beggar : There's many a man with a buzzing hive
Of thoughts in his brain that are nothing at all.

Young Beggar : Damn you, be still ! You
dead-alive

Old grinning god, I'm what you'd call
A fellow with a gift of argument,
And I tell you he should be hurrying now,

Ransacking the world, not a mere consent,
 A space unpeopled, a rusty plough
 Life is a matter of shouting and haste,
 You quiet, old seducing thing
 Why won't you shout? . . . You muddy-faced
 Old silence silence beggar-man, king . . .
 Victuals and void . . . sharp stones and boots . . .
 A coat and nakedness . . . rain and sun . . .
 A thistle that's blown and a thistle with roots . . .
 All right, old god all's one, all's one.

*He sits beside his fellow, composed.
 An exhausted SOLDIER, who has been
 out from the city, reconnoitring, comes
 in, watching the distances.*

Soldier : Have you seen a king in golden gear
 And a great host moving to bring us aid?

A pause.

Are you drunk, or daft, or won't you hear?

*He moves up the bank, and looks
 down to the city; then, fixedly, at the
 god; a pause.*

Old god of quiet, you've lost your trade.

*AN OLD MAN from the city comes in
 hurriedly. THE SOLDIER comes down.*

Soldier : News—what news from the city walls?

Citizen : An arm-thrust more and the city falls.

Is there sound or sign of the swords of the king?

Soldier : No sound, nor sign.

Citizen :

That life should bring

Her comely days to so bad a close;

Have you sought them far?

Soldier :

There are watchful foes

About us—I dare not set my feet
Beyond this place.

Citizen : And life was sweet,
A good adventure—and now an end
Of pleasant ways between friend and friend.

He moves up the bank.

O city whose red roofs look to the sea,
Never again your stones shall be
Glad of your children who smite the waves
With oars well swung,

coming down

and bonded slaves

Shall live to grudge their dead of death.

Soldier : I have fought, and hoped, and spoken well
In the midst of fears, and I'll spend no breath
Nor courage more to dispute with hell.
We're a broken city, and ill's the day ;
My dear was hungry, my dear is dead—
And old god Quiet may whistle away
Till the furies are quiet that throng my head.

He sits below the god.

Citizen : Nay, let your sword be busy down below.

Soldier : My limbs are all bemused. I cannot go.

Citizen : One sword may strike the balance in this doubt.

Soldier : The scales are turned ; the city's term is out.

Citizen : And will you choose in this extremity
To creep aside from fate ?

Soldier : I only see,
Beyond disaster that I understand
Darkly as men the process of a hand
Obscure in heaven and hell, a little space
For rest, and the remembrance of a face,

And falling sleep, then covering death, obscure
Even as life, unfathomable, sure
As fugitive thoughts that pass and turn again ;
Aye, death is dark as is the madness of men,
But life distract is savage in the throat,
A blind uncaptained vigour, and remote
From reason's airy palaces, a way
Teased by a million purposes, till day
Rattles on day in black bewilderment . . .
But death, I think, is quiet, and a spent
Sorrow at least, when every friend is kind,
And fretting worms no more can plague the mind.

Citizen : You yet are young for death.

Soldier : What cause have I

To covet dribbling age who am now put by
Bereaved and broken in my middle years
From life's assembly ?

Citizen : Thus is it one hears
From men who are light with weariness.

Soldier : It is so—
I am tired, tired, tired ; old god, you know . . .
And much disputing is but foolishness—
A ploughing of sown fields.

Citizen : And in distress
You are afraid.

Soldier : Who tries another's heart
Speaks as a god, and cannot bear his part.

Citizen : Down there for winning is a hero's name.

Soldier : I have endured, and hold it now no shame
To pass forgotten. There is no weight at all
Now in this arm, and where the heroes fall
Should I too join a sorry sword, 'twould be

But boasting in my pale infirmity
Of such immortal courage as shall lose
No virtue being secret. My blood and thews
I have not spared ; my mind is easy so ;
And, though my friend is death, I will not go
Courting a vain death for my renown.
For every hero compassing his crown,
Darkly in indistinguishable sleep
A hundred lie, and the quick world shall keep
No word of how their hearts were bright, how spent
At last. I am of these, and am content.

Citizen : Aye—it is just a weariness of brain.

Soldier : O lord of quiet, I am yours again,
After confusion, after vanity.

He turns away to the god.

Citizen (looking down to the city) : All now is done . . .

How long shall succour be . . .

He will come too late, this king who was our friend.

*There is a pause ; then in the distance
victorious cries from the besiegers :*

Voices : It is ours. The wall is breaking. Stricken : send
One thunder more. It falls . . . It falls . . . It falls !

Citizen : The time is come. And bloody burials
Shall take their lamentable toll of days,
And men shall know the sorrow that betrays
Beauty and resolution and the high
Conduct of heart proposing patiently
Desirable shapes wrought out of shapeless dust,
Not scattering of created things. And lust
Of vengeance shall make black the people's mind
So heavy is their trial, and so blind
Has queer omnipotence set us from his hand.

So death shall have his season in the land,
 Distracted death, till life shall come again
 As water to the maddened tongues of men
 Burnt on the sand of sterile leagues of waste ;
 And all the words, the tumult, and the haste
 That prosper now to feed some curious pride
 Shall pass. O quiet god, be satisfied :
 The battles fail : your healing eyes endure ;
 Kingdoms are ghosts : your kingdom is secure.

THE KING, *a great captain, moving
 to the city's relief, enters.*

King : What on the walls ?

Citizen : An end is made.

King (*as to his lieutenants*) : Stay you.
looking down to the city.

Aye, twenty thousand spear,
 Which is my measure, might be laid
 Threefold in vain against their gear.

(*To his men*) Let all be still. What men are these ?

Citizen : Though strange, devout ; they worship.

King : Whom ?

Citizen : The god of quiet.

King (*he looks at the god ; a pause*) : A god who sees.
 World-weary city at your doom,
 Strong king in your victorious hour,
 You have endured, and slain, and died,
 Poor clay that would excel in power,
 Made frantic by some silly pride.
 Could you not learn that while we grow
 As men, maybe from less to more
 While æons over æons flow,
 Yet holiest man may move before

His fellows but a single pace,
 One flight of thought, and from his tongue
 Hardly shall fall a word of grace
 More than from any clod among
 Sad naturals or runagates ?
 No. You must still with narrow eyes
 Consider how to top your mates
 And write your name across the skies ;
 Nor great for honour your desire,
 Nor vision, nor creating song,
 But merely for consuming fire,
 Sorry possessions, and a strong
 Sword that shall rule you know not how,
 Judgment, you know not whom to bind
 The fruit was full upon the bough,
 O spendthrift wind, O spendthrift wind,
 Mad hearts, mad world, mad blood of men,
 Mad counsels and mad reckoning
 You quiet god, I leave again
 Their tumult, and to you I bring
 Humility, and thought that burns
 To shape itself and fetter none
 We wake, a generation turns,
 We learn to love, and we have done
 And shall we spend these little days
 Disputing till our veins are cold ?

He sits before the god.

Citizen : The victor comes.

King :

Or comes or stays

It is no matter.

Citizen : I am old—

A spent arm, a mere messenger

Whose errands now are done. At last
I too may rest.

He sits by the others.

King : I wasted where
Shrill madness was ; those moods are cast.

A moment's pause.

Old Beggar : It is the quiet mind that keeps
The tumults of the world in poise.

Soldier : It is the angry soul that sleeps
Where the world's folly is and noise ;

King : For anger blunts us and destroys.

Citizen : We are little men to be so proud.

Young Beggar : We are fools : what was so long to
build
We break.

King : Our praise is for the loud
Tongue and the glib.

Old Beggar : The gentle-willed
We starve, and the prophet's lips are stilled.

King : It is the quiet mind that wakes.

Citizen : The angry soul ever is blind.

Young Beggar : Love is the bowl that folly breaks.

Soldier : Who rules the world the world shall find.

Old Beggar : All wisdom is the quiet mind.

A pause again. A HERALD comes in.

Herald : Are you the king who with his arms was sworn
In succour to this city now forlorn ?

King : I am that king.

Herald : And will you yet oppose
My lord of so sure aim ?

King : Which of us knows
What is our aim, much less if it be true ?

Herald : Will you set for battle ?

King :

What have I to do

With battles now? I have thought a strange new thing
This day.

Herald : Though some few score may call you king,
My master is a king would make your crown
A twisted slip of brass. Had you gone down
In battle to the city walls, your end
Had been to swell his triumph ; nor shall mend
Your case if now you bring your ranks to dare
The fury of his captaincy.

King :

I care

For nothing bitter now that men may say.
Quarrels are done.

Herald : My king shall choose a way
Chastising this infirmity of will,
Surely as had his hand been strong to fill
Your armies with disaster had you stood
With your king's name in a king's hardihood.

King: You god of quiet, some day shall men have spent
All the wild humorous blood of argument?

THE VICTORIOUS KING *comes in.*

Second King : What of the lord who thought to stride
across
My way ?

Herald : His valour will bring little loss
To your victorious arms. He has put by
The sceptre and the warrior sword, to lie
With beggars mumbling at some idol's feet—
That is the man—

Second King (to first king) : Fellow, I came to meet
A king in arms—one worthy of my might,

One strong to bear the intolerable sight
Of all my spears a moment ere he fell,
And should no other story be to tell
Save that he too was broken at my heel.
Now, though you slink aside, you yet shall feel
My majesty, the anger of my name
Captive and stripped, you shall be a jest, a shame,
A laughter to my kingdoms and your own,
You faint and thin deserter of a throne,
You spiritless who feared the naked blades
Why did you fear, and cheat me?

First King : Falsehood fades,
And consciousness is full and the world swings
true,

And happy vision rides unclouded through
The ordered ranks of circumstance alone
When man of man is patient, and the sown
Harvests of one are gathered to his gate
Uncoveted of any. And the hate
Of blood for blood and bone for bone can find
No habitation in the quiet mind
Why should the lust of man be ever set
To bring his neighbours to the cunning net,
Or drive him headlong howling through his days,
Mad with much labour in disastrous ways,
Till kind oblivion folds him, and he can
Never again be folly's mark?

Second King : Not man,
But life it is that frets us till we die,
Great life that urges, bidding us defy
All who would stand against us, and to spare
Nothing of pain and sacrifice, but dare

First King : Though the flame
Of life, of the multitudinous world, is keen
To drive the blood thrilling about us, clean
For all adventure and great knowledge, still
It is man who snares the spirit of man to spill
His fortunate treasure in dispute and vain
Adding of barren gain to barren gain.
And honour that is your hope is but a word
Distract and void to hearts that have never heard
Kindness and contemplation call.

Second King (to the god) : What bane
Of madness have you planted in his brain—
How have you slacked the heat that should have passed
Defeated to my glory, and how cast
That valour down that should have been my spoils
Not even a god shall lightly set his toils
Against my triumphs

First King : Why do you rail

Is it always so in your restless mind,
That ever your words must rattle as hail
On gods and men? Can you never find
That centre of thought where life is thrilled
As a world of wings plying the air,
A million pulses that beat, and build,
Of the flowing arcs that are weaving there,
A perfect balance—a motion due
As ever the tides of the sea have known,
True as the flight of a god is true,
Yet sweet and still as the carven stone

Second King : Will you fight ?

First King : Your word brings back to me
Swords, and blood and forgotten things,
As sometimes, out of a scent maybe
Of moss on a wall in April, springs
To a moment of life, that is born and sped
In a curious flavour of the mind,
Some buried hour from the years long dead—
So much is your word, but this.

Second King : They find
Who speak me so that they speak not well.

First King : O quiet god, I will speak no more.

Second King (to the god) : O quiet god ! And the day
shall tell

Of a god no less than a man who bore
His will against mine and repented it—
You have thought to subdue with your quiet eyes
The prey of my sword, you have thought to sit
And govern by peace, while I must rise
And stride through the world and sweat and bleed
To gather my gains, and the man shall take,
Who should measure his might against mine, a creed
That tricks my glory, my will for the sake
Of a sleepy vision ! A god may rule
As he will in some heaven with gods to hear ;
But a god who comes between men is a fool,
And a fool is little enough to fear.

He drives his dagger to the god's heart.

THE GOD rises, and speaks swaying.

The God (crying out) : Not one of you in all the world
to know me.

*THE GOD falls headlong. All rise.
There is silence for a moment.*

First King (fiercely) : Why did you do it ?

Second King : He was a bad god—

A sly god and slothful—an evil liver—

First King : Why did you do it ? He was a friendly god,

Smiling upon our faults, a great forgiver

He give us quietness—

Second King : I say that he's well dead—

First King : And I curse you for the killing,

He draws his sword.

and here I swear

To requite the honour of this god ill bestead

By a braggart king.

Second King (drawing his sword) : So ho ! at last you dare

To stand again as a man—my coney, come—

You shall die well, being slain by me.

Young Beggar (to old beggar) : Can he do

As he said and avenge the god ?

They talk together.

Second King (to Herald) : Trumpet and drum

Bid all to arms !

THE HERALD gives the signal, and they sound to arms.

First King (to soldier) : And bid my armies, you—

THE SOLDIER does so. THE OLD BEGGAR raises the head of the fallen GOD in his arm, the KINGS facing each other with drawn swords—trumpets and drums sounding from both armies. ALL go off—the KINGS fighting, and for a

moment nothing is heard save the clashing of their swords.

Old Beggar (looking into the face of the fallen god) : Not one of us in all the world to know you.

Cries and the noise of arms break out again as the Curtain falls.

$X = 0$

A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

To
GILBERT CANNAN

The Characters are—

PRONAX } *Greeks*
SALVIUS }

ILUS } *Trojans*
CAPYS }

A GREEK SENTINEL

A GREEK SERVANT

The action passes between a Greek tent and the Trojan walls, and is continuous.

$X = 0$

A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

SCENE I.

A Grecian tent on the Plain before Troy, towards the end of the ten years' war. It is a starry summer night. PRONAX and SALVIUS, two young Greek soldiers, are in the tent, SALVIUS reading by a lighted torch, PRONAX watching the night. During the scene a SENTINEL passes at intervals to and fro behind the tent.

Pronax : So is the night often at home. I have seen
White orchards brighten under a summer moon,
As now these tents under the stars. This hour
My father's coppices are full of song,
While sleep is on the comfortable house—
Unless one dear one wakes to think of me
And count my chances when the Trojan death
Goes on its nightly errand.

The SENTINEL passes.

It's a dear home,
And fragrant, and there's blessed fruit and corn,
And thoughts that make me older than my youth
Come even from the nettles at the gate.
To-day, perhaps, the harvesters are out,
And on the night is the ripe pollen blown

And this is the third harvest that has gone
 While we have wasted on a barren plain
 To avenge some wrong done in our babyhood
 On beauty that we have not seen. Three years
 But so it is, and so it must be done,
 Till the Greek oath is proven. Salvius,
 Why is all lovely thought a pain ?

Salvius : We know

Even upon the flood of adoration,
 That beauty passes. That's the tragic tale
 That is our world.

Pronax : Is it not very strange
 That, prisoned in this quarrel so long and long,
 Until to remember a little Argive street
 Is torture to the bone, yet there is now
 Nothing of hatred in the blood for them
 Whose death is all our daily use, but merely
 Consent in death, knowing that death may strike
 Across our tongues as lightly as those that lie
 For ever dumb because we might not spare.

Salvius : Not strange ; who goes in company with
 death,
 Watching his daily desolation, thinking,
 On every stroke, of all the agony
 That from that stroke goes throbbing, throbbing,
 throbbing,
 Forgets all hate. How should we hate the dead ?
 And, where death ranges as among us now,
 You, Pronax, I, and our antagonists
 And friends alike are all but as dead men

The SENTINEL passes.

Moving together in a ghostly world,

With life a luckless beggar at the door.
It is not ours to hate, who have all put by
That safety where men think eternity
Immeasurably far, and leisured passions have
Their sorry breeding place. Great kings may hate,
And priests may thunder hate, and grey-beard prophets
May cry again to those who cry their hate
In pride of their new-found authority,
Fearing lest love should mark them as they are,
And send them barren from their brutal thrift.
But not for us this envy. It is ours
Merely to die, or give the death that these
Out of their hatred or indifference will.

Pronax : It's not that a man grows tardy in his duty . . .
It's still a glad thing to do as the motherland bids,
Though the blind soul forgets how sprang the cause.
I shall die in my hour, though it should come to-day,
Not grudging. Yet it is bitterness for youth,
When nothing should be but scrutiny of life,
Mating, and building towards a durable fame,
And setting the hearthstone trim for a lover's cares,
To let all knowledge of these things go, and learn
Only of death, that should be hidden from youth,
A great thing biding upon the fulness of age,
And not made common gossip among these tides
Of daily beastliness. And still I must remember,
For all I have renounced my thronging life,
My orchards, and my rivers, and the bells
Of twilight cattle moving in the mist.

Salvius : I know ; the mind grows faint with thinking
of them—

Those little, lovely things of home. My bed

Looks to the west on the Ionian sea—
 A sweet, fresh-smelling room it is. I wrote
 My rightest poems there. I cannot see
 A sail now coming Troyward but my brain
 Is sick for that small room, above the quay
 Where sailors laugh at dawn and all day long,
 Until the silent sunset ships go out
 Into Sicilian waters.

Pronax : There your poems
 Were made, in Pylos ; and in Athens I
 Too dreamed, although I caught no lyric song—
 I envy you your song ;—I was to build
 A cleaner state ; I dreamed a policy
 Purer than states have known ; I was to bring
 Princedom to every hearth, to every man
 Knowledge that he was master of his fate.
 The dream is dulled. Three years of Trojan dust
 Have taught me but to pray at night for sleep,
 And an arm stronger in cunning than my foe's,
 A quicker eye to parry death. And, Salvius,
 What of your songs ?

Salvius : Asleep these many days,
 Biding their happy time if that should be.

Pronax : And death is watching,
 The SENTINEL passes.

 and your song, that grew
 In the womb of generations for the use
 And joy of men, may perish ere it takes
 Its larger music, that the tale may go
 That Greece drove bloodier war than Il'um ;
 That's a poor bargain. . . . But these thoughts that stir
 Like ghosts out of a life that should have been,

Neglect my duty. It is past the hour
I should be nosing along the Trojan wall
To catch what prey may be. I have scarred the wall
At the bend there where I told you, in the breaking stone,
These many nights, until at last I've made
A foothold to the top. It's a queer game,
This tripping of life suddenly in the dark,
This blasting of flesh that is wholesome yet in the blood,
And those who weep, I think, are as those would weep
If I should fall. I loathe it ; but, good-night ;
You should sleep ; it is late, and it is your guard at dawn.

He is arming himself, and wrapping himself in his cloak.

Good-night. What are you reading?

Salvius :

Songs that one

Made in my province. The sails are in his song,
And seabirds, and our level pasturelands,
And the bronzed fishers on the flowing tides.
His name was Creon. I will make such songs
If the years will.

Pronax (who has poured himself out and drunk a cup of wine): I know. Put out the torch

If you're abed before I come. Good-night.

Salvius : Good-night : good luck.

Pronax :

Pronax : And will you bid them fill
The trough ; this business may make bloody hands.

He looks out into the night, and goes.

The SENTINEL passes.

Salvius (reading) : Upon the dark Sicilian waves,
The casting fishers go . . .

The Curtain falls.

SCENE II.

On Troy wall. CAPYS, a young Trojan soldier, is on guard, looking out over the plain where the Greeks are encamped. ILUS, another young soldier, his friend, wearing a bearskin, comes to him.

Ilus : When does your watch end ?

Capys : In two hours ; at midnight.

Ilus : They're beautiful, those tents, under the stars.

It is my night to go like a shadow among them,
And, snatching a Greek life, come like a shadow again.
It's an odd skill to have won in the rose of your youth—
Two years, and once in seven days—a hundred,
More than a hundred, and only once a fault.
A hundred Greek boys, Capys, like myself—
Loving, and quick in honour, and clean of fear—
Spoiled in their beauty by me whose desire is beauty
Since first I walked the April hedgerows. Would time
But work upon this Helen's face, maybe
This nine-year quarrel would be done, and Troy
Grow sane, and her confounding councillors
Be given carts to clean and drive to market.
What of your sea-girl ? Has she grown ?

Capys : You ask

Always the question, friend. The chisels rust,
The moths are in my linen coats, my mallets
Are broken. Ilus, in my brain were limbs
Supple and mighty ; the beauty of women moved
To miraculous birth in my imagining ;
I had conceived the body of man, to make
Divine articulation of the joy
That flows uncounted in every happy step

To strike again as Troy has bidden me,
For an oath is a queer weevil in the brain.

Capys : Who's there?

A Voice: Troy and the Trojan death.

Capys :— Pass Troy.

It is still upon the plains to-night, and the stars
Are a lantern light against you—you must go
Warily, Ilus. The loss of many friends
Has sharpened my love, not dulled me against loss.
I am careful for you to-night in all this beauty
Of glowing summer—disaster might choose this night
So brutally, and so disaster likes.
Go warily.

Ilus : I know the tented squares
And every lane among the Greeks, as I know
The walls of Troy ; and I can pass at night
Within an handshot of a watching eye,
And be but a shadow of cloud or a windy bush.
A hundred times, remember.

Capys : Yet would I could come
To take your danger or share it.

Ilus : No ; there's a use
That's more than courage in this. And, Capys, yet
Those chisels must win your vision into form
For the world's light and ease. It's an ill day
Among ill days that smites the seer's lips.
Your work's to do.

Capys : And yours—that dream of Troy
Regenerate, with the heart of the people shown
In the people's life, not lamentably hurt
By men who, mazed with authority, put by
Authority's proper use, and so are evil,

While still the folk under their tyranny keep
 Their kindness, waiting upon deliverance.
 So may we come together to our work,
 In prophecy you of life, creation I.
 How long to-night ?

Ilus : Before your watch is done
 I shall be back. Here at this point, before
 The night is full ; throw me the rope upon
 The signal, thus—

*He whistles. He is climbing over the
 parapet, to which he has hooked a rope.*

Peace with you till I come.

Capys : And luck with you. Go warily. Farewell.

ILUS drops down to the plain below.

*CAPYS draws the rope up. There is
 silence for a moment.*

Capys (moving to and fro along the wall) :

Or Greek or Trojan, all is one
 When snow falls on our summertime,
 And when the happy noonday rhyme
 Because of death is left undone.

The bud that breaks must surely pass,
 Yet is the bud more sure of May
 Than youth of age, when every day
 Death is youth's shadow in the glass.

*A hand is seen groping on the parapet.
 PRONAX, looking cautiously along the
 wall, draws himself up silently, unseen
 by CAPYS, who continues :*

Beside us ever moves a hand,

Unseen, of deadly stroke, and when
It falls on youth—

*He hears the movement behind him,
and turns swiftly.*

Who's there?

Pronax (rushing upon him): A Greek unlucky to Trojan
arms—

A sworn Greek, terrible in obedience.

*His onslaught has overwhelmed CAPYS,
who falls without a cry, the Greek's
dagger in his breast. PRONAX draws
it out, looks at his dead antagonist,
shudders, peers out over the wall, and
very carefully climbs down at the point
where he came.*

The Curtain falls.

SCENE III.

*The Greek tent again. SALVIUS is still reading, and the
torch burning. A SERVANT brings a large jar of water
which he pours into the trough outside the tent. He
goes with the jar, and a moment later the SENTINEL
passes behind the tent. There is silence for a few
moments, SALVIUS turning the pages of his book. Then,
from the shadow in front of the tent, ILUS in his bearskin
is seen stealthily approaching. He reaches the tent
opening without a sound, and in the same unbroken
silence his dagger is in the Greek's heart. ILUS catches
the dead man as he falls, and lets his body sink on to one
of the couches inside the tent. The SENTINEL passes.
ILUS, breathless, waits till the steps have gone, and then,
stealthily as he came, disappears.*

There is a pause. PRONAX comes out of the darkness, and, throwing his cloak on the ground, goes straight to the trough, and begins to wash his hands.

Pronax : What, still awake, and reading ? These are rare songs,

To keep a soldier out of his bed at night.

Ugh—Salvius, sometimes it's horrible—

He had no time for a word—he walked those walls

Under the stars as a lover might walk a garden

Among the moonlit roses—this cleansing's good—

He was saying some verses, I think, till death broke in.

Cold water's good after this pitiful doing,

And freshens the mind for comfortable sleep.

Well, there, it's done, and sleep's a mighty curer

For all vexations.

The SENTINEL passes.

It's time that torch was out—

I do not need it, and you should be abed

Salvius

He looks into the tent for the first time.

What, sleeping, and still dressed ?

That's careless, friend, and the torch alight still

Salvius

Salvius, I say gods ! . . . what, friend . .

Salvius, Salvius . . .

Dead . . . it is done . . . it is done . . . there
is judgment made

Beauty is broken . . . and there on the Trojan wall

One too shall come . . . one too shall come . . .

The SENTINEL passes.

The Curtain falls.

SCENE IV.

The Trojan wall. The body of CAPYS lies in the starlight and silence. After a few moments the signal comes from ILUS below. There is a pause. The signal is repeated. There is a pause.

The Curtain falls.

COPHETUA

To
JOHN GALSWORTHY

The People of the Play—

KING COPHETUA

A CAPTAIN

FIVE WISE MEN

THE KING'S MOTHER

THE MAID

BEGGARS

COPHETUA

The Scene is the Hall of the King's Palace. On the left are two thrones, one above the other, with chairs below them. At the back of the stage is a tall doorway, open, showing a path to a broad flight of steps which leads up to the Temple. Two or three BEGGARS are sitting on the steps.

There is an open corridor to the right of the stage.

The KING'S MOTHER is seated on the lower throne. On the chairs below are five WISE MEN and a CAPTAIN.

Captain : 'Tis noon, and with echoing wing
The days of a month have sped,
And we stay to know if the king
Will take a queen to his bed.

The King's Mother : You have the oath of a king
That, be it for weal or woe,
In the space of a month he would speak of this thing,
He will come, he will come—you shall know.

First Wise Man (very old) : He will hear. Not in
vain, not in vain
Shall his people beseech him of this,
He will hear us, nor count of the pain
Which may bloom peradventure to bliss.
I have stood at the gates of the kings,
His fathers, by year and by year,
They failed not to grant us the things
That were shaped in our prayers. He will hear.

Second Wise Man : He is haughty and fiery proud,
A spirit not easy to tame,
He will face us unbroken, unbowed,
And scorn us and put us to shame.

Third Wise Man : He is King, and howbeit he
turns
To the right or the left it is well,
If he hearkens our crying or spurns,
He is King. It is well, it is well.

Fourth Wise Man (blind) : Since the day when God
shattered my sight
I fear whatso things may befall,
Who shall know if he answer aright ?
Who shall say if of wisdom our call ?

Fifth Wise Man : I wait for his word unafraid.
The ways of the world are set out
By God's will : shall we tremble dismayed
However this thing come about ?

Captain : By the might of the spear, he shall speak
As we bid him to speak, or his crown
Shall be broken—what, are we so meek
That we bow if a king should but frown ?

King's Mother : I fear him. My son, should you be
Too stubborn, how then should I set
Any peace in my heart or go free
Of a fear that I might not forget ?
How then, with a sword set between
Your crown and the men of the land,
Should the pride in my heart keep clean
For a son who held hate by the hand ?

*Enter, from the corridor, KING
COPHETUA. They all rise as he goes*

*up to his throne. As he takes his place
he motions them to sit.*

Cophetua : I have come. As a slave ye have called me.
As a dog to his masters I come.
With the sting of your tongues ye have galled me—
Do you bid me to speak or be dumb ?
O my masters, your King is before you,
A plaything, a chattel, a fool,—
Cry shame on the mothers who bore you
If you bend not his will to your rule.
Shall a king in his folly be daring
To speak as he would, to be wise
As he knows in his heart, and set flaring
His insolent flame to the skies ?
Shall a king give a thought to his vision
When his masters forbid him, and frown ?
Throw your dust in his teeth, and derision
Pluck out all the gems of his crown !

Second Wise Man : He is haughty and fiery proud,
A spirit not easy to tame.

Fourth Wise Man : There is fear in my heart, and a cloud
On my soul.

First Wise Man : O my King, when they came,
The people, to speak with the kings
Long ago they were heard.

Third Wise Man : Let him speak,
He is King, and a holiness clings
To the words of a king.

Fifth Wise Man : We are weak,
We are creatures of God, and His will
Is over us all, He alone
Is mighty to save and to spill.

King's Mother : A sword on the steps of the throne
Is lying, and blood on the blade.

Captain : Enough! Shall we chaffer with speech
As men in a market dismayed,
Shall we take not the thing we may reach
With little of toil?

For a year
Has the voice of the men of the land
Cried out for a king to hear
Of his grace. For an answer we stand.
It is little enough that we pray,
But here, in the name of the dead,
I swear you shall hearken to-day—
Will you take a queen to your bed?

Cophetua : It is well. I am bidden to speak,
You are gracious to grant me this thing.
You are strong and you bear with the weak,
You will loosen the tongue of a king.

Second Wise Man : He is haughty and fiery proud.

Captain : No more. There are rumours that go
In the streets—

Cophetua : Unbroken, unbowed,
I give you your answer—I know
Of the rumours and threatening spears,
I know of the sword in the night,
But nothing of pitiful fears,
I will answer,—and hear me aright—
I will not take a queen to my bed,
Though the world should clamour and cry,
Till my will is so shaped. It is said.
You may go—I have spoken it, I.

[For a moment there is silence. There

mere assertion gives place to reasoning.

First Wise Man : Who shall be king in the end
When you are fallen to sleep,
To whom shall our children look to keep
Peace between friend and friend ?

Cophetua : Your children shall carve a way
To peace with the might of their hands.
Shall they bear to their doors the fruit of the lands
Because, on a far-off day,
A king of their fathers fell
And sold the gates of his soul
To the rabble ranks for a pitiful dole,
And married his love to hell ?

Second Wise Man : You are haughty and fiery proud.

Cophetua : The meanest man of you all
May mate where he would. Shall a king then fall
And tremble before you, cowed,
And be humbled and shorn of fame,
Be called a braggart, a knave,
That he dares no less than a thrall to save
The shrine of his heart from shame ?

Third Wise Man : You are King, and I dare not cross
My will with a crowned king's,
But your will so set to your people brings
Peril of branded loss.
There are kingdoms over the seas,
And kingdoms near to your gates,
Whose daughters are moulded for comely mates,
And will you not choose of these,
And gather about your throne
A safety fashioned of might ?

Cophetua : I will break my body to dust in fight,
I am careless of blood and bone,
I will forfeit my latest breath,
I will harry the stranger lords,
I will face unfriended the outland hordes,
I will kiss the lips of death,
I will keep no secret store
Of peace in my house, I will spare
No strength in what things a man may dare
Or men have dared before ;
But the doors of my love shall be
Guarded and unbetrayed,
And reckoning there shall be surely made
'Twixt none but my God and me.

Fourth Wise Man : I fear the striving of men
And the challenge of boasting lips.

Cophetua : Old man, you are nigh to your day's eclipse,
Would you have in your fancy, when
You pass away to the night,
The strands of a troubled tale
Of a high king setting his love for sale ?

Fourth Wise Man (bewildered merely) : The Lord hath
shattered my sight.

Fifth Wise Man : Be it as you have said,
God watches.

Cophetua : He watches well.
I have strayed too near to the gates of hell,
But He watched me, and His hand led.

Captain : You blacken His name. We are proud,
We people, aye, proud as a king ;
You shall rue the day when you chose to fling
Your scorn as pence to the crowd.

We will that a queen should sit
On the king's right hand, and still
We stand as men for the fruits of our will,
Nor abate one word of it.

King's Mother : My son, O my son, be not
Too stubborn—I fear the end,
I fear the day that no days may mend,
And the happening unforgot.
Is it little, my son, you lose ?
There are women with faces fair,
And maddening limbs and shining hair,
And goodly women to choose ;
Women whose kisses would fire
Your lips and quicken your blood,
And set a tumult, a golden flood
In your soul, and a new desire
In the season of scents and stars,
And a sweeter song in the day—

Cophetua : My mother, you have no word to say
Of worth. Would you set in bars
The sacred spirit or me ?
No, mother, you know I speak
As a man should speak, but your will is weak
For fear of the things to be.
You are true, my mother, you bring
A deep wise love to the child,—
Let your love be stainless, and undefiled
By craven fears for the king.

Captain : She is wise of her fear—

Cophetua : Be still—
You are rude, sir, sharpen your tongue
On the steps of a throne whose king is sung

For a poor unkingly will.

I have given my answer ; to each

As he spake I have answered again.

Do you hold me a gibbering clod among men,

To waver and juggle with speech ?

[He moves from the throne to the open doorway at the back.]

For my people, I know them aright,

They will hear me, they hold not in scorn

A man whose flame without fear is borne,

With the wings of the wind in flight.

I will tell them. I wait the call

Of my soul and none else beside ;

I will bring to the hall of their kings a bride

When my choice unbidden fall.

[During the foregoing speeches other BEGGARS have joined those sitting on the steps. Among them is a MAID. As the KING now goes out of the Hall and up the steps to the Temple, the BEGGARS hold out their hands for alms. The KING gives. The MAID, who is seated on an upper step alone, by the door of the Temple, asks nothing. The KING pauses for a moment to look at her ; she touches his cloak with her hand, and lifts it to her lips. He passes into the Temple.]

Second Wise Man : He has gone. He is fiery proud.

Third Wise Man : He is King. It is well, it is well.

Fourth Wise Man : There is fear on my heart, and a cloud.

King's Mother : There is building a story to tell—

First Wise Man : He leaves the clear ways that are worn.

Fifth Wise Man : 'Tis the purpose of God—we must bend.

Captain ; Not in vain shall he mock us and scorn.

King's Mother : A story—who knows of the end ?

Second Wise Man : This day is fulfilled my foretelling.

Third Wise Man : The stars are in counsel with kings.

Fourth Wise Man : There is gloom in the house of our dwelling.

Fifth Wise Man : To God be the shaping of things.

First Wise Man : The thread of the years now is broken.

Captain : To the edge of his sword be the shame.

King's Mother : What word of this day will be spoken ?

What song will be sung of our fame ?

[*The KING comes through the Temple doors. The BEGGARS, as before, hold out their hands ; the MAID alone asks nothing. COPHETUA offers her a bag of gold, which she takes ; she rises and stands with the KING at the top of the steps ; she pours the gold from the bag down the steps, and the BEGGARS collect the scattered coins. She kisses the bag, and ties it in her girdle. The KING stands looking at her for a moment, then comes down to the Hall ; he stands by the open doors.*

Cophetua : I knelt before God's altar rail,
And something leapt within my brain ;

God's mother smiled ; her beauty pale
Was over me ; and then again
I heard my people crying out,
And woven in the cries of them
I heard a kiss that clung about
The colours of my raiment's hem.

My prayers went up with feathered speed,
But still I saw the face of one
Who said no word of all her need
Among the beggars in the sun,
Of one who sought no little dole
But gave great tribute to her King,
And something fiery in my soul
Stirred with the passion of the spring.

And still I heard my people cry
"A queen, a queen, we seek a queen."
No pride was on my lips, and I
Told God what thing I then had seen,
What rumour through my blood was sent
As I passed through His holy gate,
And surely up to God they went—
My little secret words of fate.

Out of God's house I came. She stood
Before me. She had nought to bring
Of land or warrant counted good
To fire the temper of a king,
Only a treasure in her eyes
Of pure and consecrated days,
And presage that her soul was wise
Of travel in the starry ways.

You counselled me. I heard your words,
 Your threats I heard, your cunning speech,
 Your clamouring of sheathless swords,
 But citadelled beyond the reach
 Of all these things my heart was free ;
 Yet then a secret word was said
 In the blue air. This thing shall be—
 A queen is coming to my bed.

Captain : The child of a beggar !

Second Wise Man :

You dare

Lift up this shame in your land ?

First Wise Man : You speak not in wisdom—beware.

Fourth Wise Man : God give me to understand.

King's Mother : My son, O my son, but wait

A little—how should this be—

A son of proud old kings to mate

With a girl base-born ?

Fourth Wise Man : Ah, me !

Cophetua : How ! Would ye drive me to and fro

As straw beneath the goodman's flail !

God's angels laugh, I think, to know

How much a king's word may avail.

I stand, road-girt, before a sweet

New land of holy joys to-day,

And she alone has led my feet,

And she alone shall say me nay.

“Base-born,” you cry—“a beggar's child.”

So be it. Yet there haply ran

Some strain of passion undefiled

When in the twilight some tall man

Bore homeward to his bridal bed
 Of curling leaves beneath the sky
 A clear-limbed girl whose beauty led
 Love laughing in captivity.

You bid me mate. And shall it be
 To make adultery a thing
 Honoured from sea to shining sea
 For that the sinner is a king?
 My blood is kingly? It shall take
 A strain of vagrant wind and sun,
 I, born a king, henceforth will make
 The people and the sceptre one.

*[He walks up the steps to the MAID ;
 he stands speaking to her, and then leads
 her down into the Hall.]*

The Maid : It seemed a very little thing
 That you should come and lead me down
 Here to your throne. You are a king,
 There is a splendour on your crown,
 Yet you were born of changing dust
 Even as I, and when you spoke
 That word to me, the great God thrust
 His arm out and the barrier broke,
 And I was maid and you were man,
 Built of one flesh ; it was as though
 No word had been since time began
 Of kings and beggars.

Cophetua : And a low
 Sweet sound of music fell about
 My senses, as of beating wings

Of loves that sway the world without
A thought of beggars or of kings.

The Maid : You are king, and kings are great,
Yet, though I'd kneel before a throne,
My heart would be inviolate—
No king should claim it for his own ;
I worship kingly men, I bow
Before the King's ancestral might,
Yet all these things are nought, and now
No king is standing in my sight.
I see a man who spoke to me
As a man should speak, loving well.

Cophetua : I see a queen whose lips might be
Fashioned great histories to tell.

The Maid : I see a man who set aflame
My womanhood and made it whole.

Cophetua : I see a holy queen who came
As a great song into my soul.

The Maid : I saw an eagle in the air—

Cophetua : The eagle clove the cloudy ways—

The Maid : Strong winged he was, and proud and
fair—

Cophetua : And there he met the golden rays
Hidden to earth—

The Maid : And far and far
He sped with swift and level flight,

Cophetua : And wrung the glory of a star
Out of the garner of the night.

First Wise Man : Great queens might take her by the
hand.

Third Wise Man : Great kings might kiss her on the
lips.

Fifth Wise Man : God's laughter now is on the land.

Fourth Wise Man : Light trembles through my day's eclipse.

Second Wise Man : The king establishes his pride.

Captain : I kneel to her, no threat is now

Upon my tongue, she is a bride

To whom a king's folk well may bow.

King's Mother : My child, what way the King may choose

Is well ; the soul of you is wise,

And a queen's crown will no way lose

Its splendour set above your eyes ;

The word is spoken, and aloud

Along the day as fire it runs,

And you shall bear your King a proud

And comely line of kingly sons.

The Maid : Not dowered as a queen might be

Who sold herself you see me here,

Yet something do I bring for fee,

Good counsel, comfortable cheer,

A body undefiled, a soul

Not alien before the Lord,

A will unbent, a purpose whole,

A passion shining as a sword.

To you in humble-wise, my King,

With nought of fear or servile greed,

My sacred love unsoiled I bring,

My service, and my woman's need.

A story of some careful days

Spent in a cloister no man knows,

Some peace of silent liliated ways,
Some beauty of the curling rose.

[*The KING leads her up to the throne. They stand one on each side of it.*]

Cophetua (to the people) : Am I the less a king that here
I choose as might a man uncrowned,
Or should you hold a queen more dear
For armed men or tribute ground ?
If so it be, the word be said,
And we will pass from out your land,
And sleep upon a stranger bed
And prosper by a stranger hand.

First Wise Man : She too shall pass where queens have
trod.

Third Wise Man : You, being King, have chosen
well.

Fifth Wise Man : Not niggard is the hand of God.

Fourth Wise Man : No veiled fear is now to tell.

Second Wise Man : Now beautiful is all your pride.

Captain : My sword shall bring you peace alone.

King's Mother : My trouble now is purified,
And love is laughing from a throne.

Cophetua : In the years far away, far away,
Our love shall be told as a song.

The Maid : Many men shall remember, and say—
They kept their love guarded from wrong.

Cophetua : Your beauty shall be as a tale
For the firing of hearts to the end.

The Maid : And never the story shall fail
Of a king who was mighty to lend
A glory to love in his land.

Cophetua : And the children of men unbegot
Shall listen, and understand
The tale of a love unforgot,
Our kiss shall be set on the crest
Of the travelling years, and be borne
As a torch from the east to the west,
Till the sinews of love be outworn.

CURTAIN

THE STORM

was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on Saturday, May 8th, 1915, under the direction of the author, with the following cast :—

<i>Alice</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Cecily Byrne
<i>Joan</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Betty Pinchard
<i>Sarah</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Margaret Chatwin
<i>An Old Man</i>	.	.	.	.	.	W. Ribton Haines
<i>A Young Stranger</i>	.	.	.	.	.	E. Ion Swinley

At the Stratford-upon-Avon Memorial Theatre, on August 26th, 1915, *Alice* was played by Mary Merrall, and on the play's revival at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on March 18th, 1916, the cast was—

<i>Alice</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Mona Limerick
<i>Joan</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Betty Pinchard
<i>Sarah</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Margaret Chatwin
<i>An Old Man</i>	.	.	.	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>A Young Stranger</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Scott Sunderland

THE GOD OF QUIET

was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, on Saturday, October 7th, 1916, under the direction of the author, with the following cast :—

<i>A Young Beggar</i>	.	.	.	Joseph A. Dodd
<i>An Old Beggar</i>	.	.	.	W. Brunton
<i>A Citizen</i>	.	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>A Soldier</i>	.	.	.	William Armstrong
<i>First King</i>	.	.	.	Felix Aylmer
<i>A Herald</i>	.	.	.	Frank Moore
<i>Second King</i>	.	.	.	Frank D. Clewlow
<i>The God</i>	.	.	.	Noel Shammon

The stage setting and the costumes were designed by Arthur J. Gaskin.

X = 0; A NIGHT OF THE TROJAN WAR

was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre,
on Saturday, April 14th, 1917, under the direction of the
author, with the following cast :—

<i>Pronax</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Felix Aylmer
<i>Salvius</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Nicholas Bly
<i>Ilus</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Joseph A. Dodd
<i>Capys</i>	.	.	.	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>A Greek Sentinel</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Alfred J. Brooks
<i>A Greek Servant</i>	.	.	.	.	.	Richard Wayne

The setting was devised by Frank D. Clewlow.

COPHETUA

First produced by the Pilgrim Players in 1911, when the actors were anonymous, was revived at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 27th October, 1917, under the direction of the Author with the following cast:—

<i>King Cophetua</i>	.	.	.	William J. Rea
<i>A Captain</i>	.	.	.	Frank Moore
<i>First Wise Man</i>	.	.	.	Noel Shammon
<i>Second</i>	„	„	.	Frank D. Clewlow
<i>Third</i>	„	„	.	Alfred J. Brooks
<i>Fourth</i>	„	„	.	William Bache
<i>Fifth</i>	„	„	.	Joseph A. Dodd
<i>The King's Mother</i>	.	.	.	Margaret Chatwin
<i>The Maid</i>	.	.	.	Dorothy Green

The stage setting and costumes were designed by the Author and Frank D. Clewlow.

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